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Teaching Secondary Music

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Defense for Music Education

The Department of Education states that their “mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.” Most school districts’ Mission statements build on this foundation. It is the goal of American Schools to give all students a well-rounded, excellent education, so they may enter the 21st century global community as contributors and leaders in their society. I believe music is an essential element to meeting these goals of education.

Music surrounds our daily lives; arguably, more than any other school subject, certainly unique from other areas of study. It is a subject worthy of life-long academic study, and yet it has the ability, even the nature, to touch us directly and personally. Throughout history and in every culture music has been found. It is basic to human culture. Music is communal – it draws people together. Look around the world, or even just in America; every culture has its own music that shapes their identity and values. Studying music not only helps students learn about others’ culture and values around the world, but also about themselves. Music is personal – it identifies deeply within us. It can change emotions, lift souls in worship, allow expression where words do not suffice, give joy, move one physically, comfort hearts, offer repose in a hectic life, show beauty. Music is creative – it offers students an outlet to express themselves. They can learn to express their full range of emotions, ideas, and thoughts in a healthy constructive way. Music develops life skills – discipline, listening, confidence, critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity and innovation (Partnership for 21st Century Skills). As students study and perform music in ensemble and individually, these skills are developed as an intrinsic part of the musical learning process.

As music commands such an important role in our daily life, music education should be available to all students as part of a high school’s core curriculum. Elementary school academia lays a foundation on which secondary school students assimilate and solidify their learning. To end a student’s music education in middle school would be a great disservice to their development.

My goal in music education is to teach students to be able to create music independently and corporately, to teach the formal concepts of music and connections to history, culture, and other disciplines, to develop life skills, and to impart a life-long love and value for music. I want to meet each student at their ability level, and challenge them to reach new expertise.

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.

**1a.** Students sing accurately and with good breath control and posture throughout their singing ranges, alone and in small and large ensembles

**1b.** Students sing music written in two and three parts.

**1c.** Students sing music representing diverse genres and cultures, with expression appropriate for the work being performed

1. Reading and notating music.

**2a.** Students who participate in a choral or instrumental ensemble or class sightread, accurately and expressively, music with a level of difficulty of 2, on a scale of 1 to 6

**2b**. Students identify and define standard notation symbols for pitch, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, articulation, and expression

1. Evaluating music and music performances.

**3a**. Students evaluate the quality and effectiveness of their own and others' performances by applying specific criteria appropriate for the style of the music and offer constructive suggestions for improvement.

1. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

**4a.** Students learn about composers, genres, and styles, as represented in the choir’s repertoire, and their connection to history and culture.

**Achievement Standard:**

**1a.** Students sing accurately and with good breath control throughout their singing ranges, alone and in small and large ensembles

**1b.** Students sing music written in two and three parts.

**1c.** Students sing music representing diverse genres and cultures, with expression appropriate for the work being performed

**Assessment strategy:**

Once during a semester, the students will be heard in quartets. The director and section leaders will listen and rate the performances of the singers.

Twice during a semester the students will be asked to sing solo, demonstrating a section of music from the repertoire.

**Description of response:**

*1 a. b. Basic Level:*  1. The student's intonation, rhythm, and diction are marginally acceptable. Most pitches are correct, but there are a number of errors.  2. The student demonstrates an effective singing range of a sixth to an octave. (This determination should be postponed if the voice has not finished changing.)  3. The student sometimes breathes in the middle of phrases or otherwise demonstrates poor habits of breathing and breath control.

*1 c. Basic Level:*  1. The student is marginally successful in making clear distinctions among the three styles when singing.  2. The student's performances are marginally accurate, and demonstrate acceptable results with respect to intonation, rhythm, expression, and the other elements of performance.

*1 a. b. Proficient Level:*  1. The student's intonation, rhythm, and diction are good. The pitches are correct, though there are sometimes a few errors in more difficult music.  2. The student demonstrates an effective singing range of an octave to a tenth. (This determination should be postponed if the voice has not finished changing.) The throat is open and the jaw is relaxed. The voice is resonant and supported from the diaphragm.  3. The student breathes only at the ends of phrases and routinely demonstrates good habits of breathing and breath control.

*1 c. Proficient Level:*  1. The student is generally successful in making clear distinctions among the three styles when singing.  2. The student's performances are generally accurate, and demonstrate good results with respect to intonation, rhythm, expression, and the other elements of performance.

*1 a. b. Advanced Level:*  1. The student's intonation, rhythm, and diction are excellent. The pitches are correct.  2. The student demonstrates an effective singing range of more than a tenth. (This determination should be postponed if the voice has not finished changing.) The throat is open and the jaw is relaxed. The voice is resonant and supported from the diaphragm. The student demonstrates correct formation of vowels and consonants.  3. The student breathes only at the ends of phrases and otherwise demonstrates excellent habits of breathing and breath control.

*1 c. Advanced Level:*  1. The student is highly successful in making clear distinctions among the three styles when singing.  2. The student's performances are very accurate, and demonstrate excellent results with respect to intonation, rhythm, expression, and the other elements of performance

**Achievement Standard:**  2a. Students who participate in a choral or instrumental ensemble or class sightread, accurately and expressively, music with a level of difficulty of 2, on a scale of 1 to 6

**Assessment strategy:**

The student is given the music to three unfamiliar representative works. The works vary in level of difficulty from 1 to 3. The student is asked to sightread an excerpt of eight to sixteen measures from each. The works may be solo repertoire or appropriate parts from ensemble repertoire. The student is given two minutes to study each work, during which time he or she may practice silently but not aloud.

**Description of response:**

*Basic Level:*  1. In music with a level of difficulty of 1, the student can perform the correct pitches. In more difficult music, technical problems are apparent from time to time.  2. In music with a level of difficulty of 1, the student can perform the correct rhythms. The beat is steady and the tempo is approximately correct. In more difficult music, the rhythm may be inaccurate at times, the beat may be unsteady, and the tempo may be inappropriate.  3. In music with a level of difficulty of 1, the student is able to demonstrate sensitivity to dynamics, phrasing, expression, and style. In more difficult music, the required level of skill is sometimes lacking.

*Proficient Level:*  1. In music with a level of difficulty of 2, the student can perform the correct pitches. In more difficult music, technical problems are apparent from time to time.  2. In music with a level of difficulty of 2, the student can perform the correct rhythms. The beat is steady and the tempo is approximately correct. In more difficult music, the rhythm may be inaccurate at times, the beat may be unsteady, and the tempo may be inappropriate.  3. In music with a level of difficulty of 2, the student is able to demonstrate sensitivity to dynamics, phrasing, expression, and style. In more difficult music, the required level of skill is sometimes lacking.

*Advanced Level:*  1. In music with a level of difficulty of 3, the student can perform the correct pitches.  2. In music with a level of difficulty of 3, the student can perform the correct rhythms. The beat is steady and the tempo is approximately correct.  3. In music with a level of difficulty of 3, the student is able to demonstrate sensitivity to dynamics, phrasing, expression, and style.

**Achievement Standard:**  2b. Students identify and define standard notation symbols for pitch, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, articulation, and expression

**Assessment strategy:**

The student is asked (1) to locate specific notation symbols in works of music and (2) to explain or demonstrate what those symbols and other music terms tell the performer to do. Symbols for the following should be included among others: slur or tie, tenuto, accent, staccato, fermata, ledger line, double sharp, double flat, natural, key signature, meter signature, and repeat sign. The following terms and abbreviations should be included among others: major, minor, molto, poco, coda, a cappella, D.C., and D.S. Names of the notes on the lines and spaces of the treble and bass clefs should be included as well.

**Description of response:**

*Basic Level:*  The student can identify and explain 50 percent of the symbols and terms.

*Proficient Level:*  The student can identify and explain 75 percent of the symbols and terms.

*Advanced Level:*  The student can identify and explain 90 percent of the symbols and terms.

**Achievement Standard:**  3a. Students evaluate the quality and effectiveness of their own and others' performances by applying specific criteria appropriate for the style of the music and offer constructive suggestions for improvement

**Assessment strategy:**

The student is given one example each of a performance. Both a written score and a recording of each are provided. The student is asked to list what is well done by the performer and to offer constructive suggestions for improvement. Some of the examples to be evaluated should be selected from the student's own work.

Students will also be required to evaluate the ensemble, sectional, individual, and personal performances in rehearsal.

**Description of response:**

*Basic Level:*  1. The student's list of what is well done reveals some familiarity with the particular style or genre but is incomplete or lacking in specifics.  2. The student's suggestions for improvement demonstrate some familiarity with what is desirable and possible in that style or genre, but to some extent are unrealistic, not feasible, or lacking in insight.

*Proficient Level:*  1. The student's list of what is well done includes one or two positive features of the example (if one or two can reasonably be identified).  2. The student identifies one or two features of the example in need of improvement (if one or two can reasonably be identified). The student's suggestions for improvement demonstrate knowledge of what is desirable and possible in that style or genre, given the level of experience of the performer.

*Advanced Level:*  1. The student's list of what is well done includes three positive features of the example (or, if fewer, as many as can reasonably be identified). The list reveals familiarity with a variety of comparable examples from performers of this level of experience and background.  2. The student identifies three features of the example in need of improvement (or, if fewer, as many as can reasonably be identified). The student's suggestions for improvement demonstrate broad knowledge of what is desirable and possible in that style or genre, given the level of experience of the performer.

**Achievement Standard : 4a.** Students learn about composers, genres, and styles, as represented in the choir’s repertoire, and their connection to history and culture.

**Assessment strategy:**

The student is asked to present on a composer (from the choir’s repertoire) and provide a brief biography, cultural/historical context, and describe what there is about their music that is distinctive in style and genre. How can one tell that type of music from other types of music? The main task is to identify the distinguishing characteristics of the music and tell specifically what is different with respect to each of the distinguishing characteristics. The distinguishing characteristics may include rhythm, melody, harmony or texture, form, timbre, and expression. Examples of genres and styles might include madrigals, French Impressionist music, Gilbert and Sullivan, Irish folk music, blues, country and western, ragtime, salsa, and mariachi music.

**Description of response:**

*Basic Level:*1. The student can explain what is distinctive about two of the distinguishing characteristics (e.g., rhythm, melody, harmony or texture, form, timbre, and expression) for one of the three genres or styles of music.  2. The student's explanations are generally correct but are incomplete or inaccurate in certain details.

*Proficient Level:*  1. The student can explain what is distinctive about three of the distinguishing characteristics for two of the three genres or styles of music.  2. The student's explanations are accurate and complete.

*Advanced Level:*  1. The student can explain what is distinctive about four of the distinguishing characteristics for all three genres or styles of music.  2. The student's explanations are accurate and complete. They reveal a high degree of knowledge of the music.

Course: Meets twice per week 1hr.

Minimum 2 performances: Winter and Spring

Estimate: 12 performance songs per semester. Repertoire include variety of music: variety of genres, time periods, languages, and cultures.

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| **Weekly Overview:**  Each rehearsal begins with warm-ups and selected exercises to improve technique. Not every area is covered in every class, but rather overtime.  **Once/week:** short student presentation of composer/style from ensemble repertoire.  **Mid-way through Semester:**  Students written critique of a performance due.  **3 weeks before Concert:**  Quartet Hearings  **Winter/Spring Concert**  **Post-performance:**  In-class group critique of Performance | **Pre-rehearsal:**  Warm-up, breathing, range, solfége, ear-training.  **During repertoire rehearsal:**  -Sections and individuals asked to sight-read from repertoire.  -Students required to solo sing from repertoire 2/sem.  -Group evaluate performances of peers w/in given guidelines.  -Identify expression notation in repertoire |

**Required Resources:**

Rehearsal Room

Piano

Chalk/White board

Risers

**Materials:**

Choral Music

Black Folders

Wiki

**Works Cited**

National Association for Music Education. National Standards of Music Education. 1 January 2012. 21 February 2012 <http://www.menc.org/resources/view/national-standards-for-music-education>.

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U.S. Department of Education. Overview Mission. 20 October 2011. 21 February 2012 <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/mission/mission.html>.